

eColenso

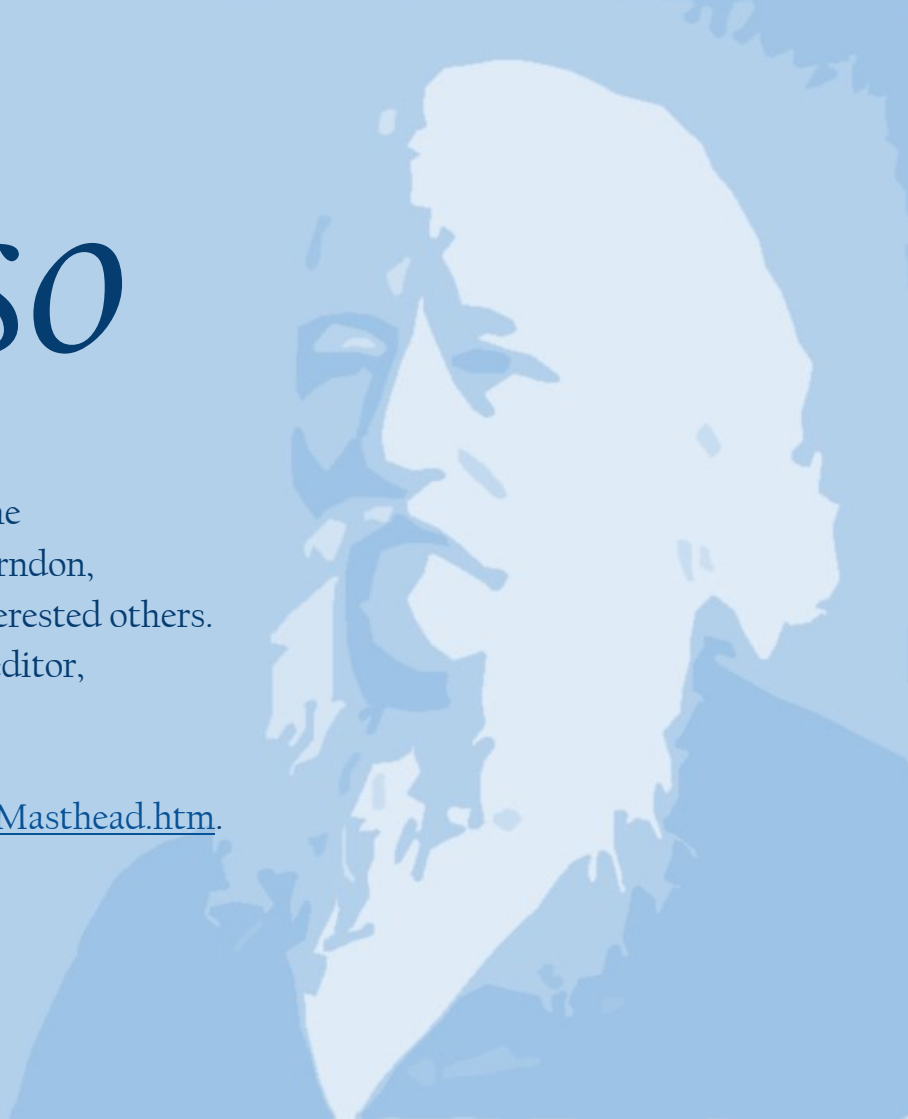
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Colenso on truth

And here, permit me to observe... that my whole life—particularly these last 30 years,—has been spent in an eager search after Truth: whether in Religious, Ecclesiastical, Social and Natural Science....¹

William Colenso was born in 1811 and died in 1899. He therefore lived through the Victorian age, when the perception of truth changed forever. As a young man he was taught that the word of God was absolute truth. As an old man who had met Darwin, who had met and corresponded with Hooker, who had corresponded with Huxley—whose own cousin had famously written that the first five books of the Old Testament were not the Word of God, but often inaccurate accounts of Jewish history by various authors—he had acquired evidence that questioned his faith, that questioned the Church, that questioned even whether those qualities traditionally said to separate man from the “lower animals” had any basis in reality.

As with many Victorians, he was preoccupied therefore with the nature of truth. He scattered quotations about truth, honesty and simplicity through his writing. This from Cicero...

“We delight in things that are true, that is, that are faithful, simple, permanent; such as are vain, false, deceitful we abhor.”

He approvingly quoted Stansfield Parkinson’s introduction to the published journals of his brother Sydney Parkinson,

“I have heard many of the surviving companions of this amiable young man dwell with pleasure on the relation of his

singular simplicity of conduct, his sincere regard for truth, his ardent thirst after knowledge, his indefatigable industry to obtain it, and his generous disposition in freely communicating with the most friendly participation to others, that information which none but himself could have obtained.... it should be said of his journal... that its only ornament is truth, and its best recommendation, characteristic of himself, its genuine simplicity."²

Colenso could see much of himself in this.

His determination to be truthful would not be diverted by less worthy considerations such as friendship, failure to convince, or misunderstanding by others. He quoted 4th century Pope Clement's *Recognitions*, "

It very frequently happens that he who defends the truth does not gain the victory, since the hearers are either prejudiced, or have no great interest in the better cause."

and contemporary Oxford Professor Benjamin Jowett...

*"We cannot express any truth without involving ourselves in some degree of error or occasionally conveying an impression to others wholly erroneous."*³

He became preoccupied with the scientific method, and stressed the importance of good education in instilling into learners a disciplined way of discovering truth.

Now what I mean by a scientific education is, the teaching of the power of observing; the teaching of accuracy; the difficulty of attaining to a real knowledge of the truth; and the methods by which one may pass from that which was proved, to the thought of that which was also capable of being

proved. The first thing to learn is the power of observing, the power of seeing things in their relations to other things, and the modifications they might undergo; this, though a difficult thing, is attainable. Science teaches not only how to observe, but how to record facts, and how to arrive at general conclusions upon facts. The habit of accuracy which Science inculcates, makes a man accurate in the ordinary business and pursuits of life."⁴

We can be too easily diverted from that accurate scientific approach by bias, by fancy, by pet theories and preconceived notions, and by ignoring evidence properly attained by others. Colenso quoted...

Richard Owen. *"Past experience of the chance aims of human fancy, unchecked and unguided by observed facts, shows how widely they have ever glanced away from the gold centre of truth."*

Max Müller. *"Every kind of evidence is made to tell by writers who have a theory to defend."*

Cicero. *"Time erases the fictions of unfounded opinions; but confirms the judgements which are in accordance with truth."*

Bailey (Festus). *"The truth is perilous never to the true, Nor knowledge to the wise; and to the fool, And to the false, error and truth alike. Error is worse than ignorance."*

St. Jerome. *"If an offence come out of the Truth, better is it that the offence come than that the Truth be concealed."*

He would expand on truth in scientific enquiry in 1878,

*It being now evening time with me, and through my having noticed the many crude theories which have been broached concerning the Whence of the Maori, not a few of which, by their several writers, have been laboriously propped and buttressed with all and every item, however insignificant, far-fetched, and vague, they could possibly impress and bring forward, but in which, in my estimation, they have notwithstanding signally failed, because they laboured to build up a pet fancy or hobby of their own rather than the truth; some even starting with assuming the very proposition which they had to prove. For my own part, I altogether disclaim all such; I have no pet theory; I only seek the truth; to do what little I may towards establishing it;... ”.*⁵

*I did not intend to write another line on this subject of the Moa age, but in this same volume (xxv.), in the Proceedings of the Wellington Philosophical Society, are many observations made at different meetings of the Society by the members present on this theme. Some of them I am really sorry to find recorded there, because they are merely the old, old stories and tales which have long ago been answered, and shown to be untenable, and refuted, and therefore such should not be again resurrected. Indeed, in so doing, the truth—the “true facts”—will never be arrived at;⁶ and that true and proper remark of Max Müller (in his late lectures at Glasgow, as brought forward by me in a paper in this same volume, p. 496) is very applicable here: “What is of immense importance in all scientific discussions is the spirit of truth. To make light of a fact that has been established, to ignore intentionally an argument which we cannot refute, to throw out guesses which we know we cannot prove—nay, which we do not even attempt to prove—is simply wrong, and poisons the air in which true science can breathe and live.”*⁷

... I might justly and properly add... the great and good matter of State Education—civil and scientific, reasonable and truly religious,—recently undertaken by the Government of our Country: but this is yet in its infancy, and would require a whole paper to do it justice. Thus much, however, I would say, as it bears greatly on our subject of “Sabbath Observance,”—that the sooner the various and dissonant old Church Catechisms are altered, (Like the new Bible Commentary, and the new translation of the Bible,) and so made conformable to truth, and to truthful religious and scientific teaching, the better for the children, (especially those at Sunday Schools,) and for the future generation,—aye, for the rising state of New Zealand.—And here I would call attention to some solemn words of a late Archbishop of the English Church,—words well worthy of being weighed by all Teachers,—whether of Sunday or of Day School—by religions as well as scientific Teachers of all classes:—“He who propagates a delusion, and he who connives at it when already existing, both tamper with Truth. We must neither lead nor leave men to mistake falsehood for Truth. Not to undeceive, is to deceive. The giving, or not correcting, false reasons for right conclusions, false grounds for right belief, false principles for right practice,—the holding forth or fostering false consolations, false encouragements, or false sanctions, or conniving at their being held forth or believed,—are all pious frauds. This springs from, and it will foster and increase, a want of veneration for Truth: it is an affront put upon the Spirit of Truth.” On these words I would ask one question—of Ministers and Sunday School Teachers. How can we serve the Living and True God, except so far as we are servants of the Truth? And how can we be servants of the Truth, if we knowingly shut our eyes to facts which we do not like, because they conflict with our preconceived notions; and if we

*not only do this ourselves, but attempt to close, or to keep shut, or to throw dust in, the eyes of others under our influence, that they may not be able to see the facts which God's wise Providence, in this age of the world, has made known to us for our instruction and guidance in life?*⁸

Furthermore, the motivation for seeking the truth should simply be the love of truth, because only from that purity of purpose can the world's beauty be understood and appreciated: "there is a rapture in gazing with a *trained* eye on this wondrous world."

In student-life there are those who seek knowledge for its own sake, and there are those who seek it for the sake of the prize, and the honour, and the subsequent success in life that knowledge brings. To those who seek knowledge for its own sake the labour is itself reward. Attainment is the highest reward. Doubtless the prize stimulates exertion, encourages and forms a part of the motive, but only a subordinate one, and knowledge would still have a "price above rubies" if there were no prize at all. They who seek knowledge for the sake of a prize are not genuine lovers of knowledge. They only love the rewards of knowledge; had it no honour or substantial advantage connected with it they would be indolent. It is a spurious goodness which is good for the sake of reward. The child that speaks truth for the sake of the praise of truth is not truthful; the man who is honest because "honesty is the best policy" has not integrity in his heart. Would that the parents of families here in Hawke's Bay could be brought to duly consider this, and to perceive the great and lasting advantages and benefits and true pleasures arising from the following of Nature and her manifold teachings, and so direct and lead their progeny into something better than the low frivolities and transient pleasures and waste of time of the present age.

For, believe me, there is a rapture in gazing with a trained eye on this wondrous world. Let us not depreciate what God has given. The highest pleasure of sensation comes through the eye; she ranks above all the rest of the senses in dignity. He whose eye is so refined by culture and discipline that he can repose with pleasure upon the serene outline of beautiful forms has reached the purest of the sensational raptures. There is a joy in contemplating the manifold forms in which the All-beautiful has concealed His essence—the living garment in which the Invisible has robed His mysterious loveliness. In every aspect of nature there is joy; whether it be the purity of virgin morning, or the sombre grey of a day of clouds, or the solemn pomp and majesty of night; whether it be the chaste lines of the crystal on the yonder Ruahine Mountain-range, or the waving ever-changing outlines of distant hills (as those south beyond Havelock and north towards Wairoa) tremulously visible through the slanting rays of the setting sun; the minute petals of the New Zealand daisy, or the overhanging forms of mysterious ancient forests: it is a pure delight to see. I hope a better day is at hand for our Government schools, when Education Boards (if existing) or Committees (when formed of proper literate men) will pay full attention to this one great qualification, or main desideratum, on the part of teachers seeking situations—viz., their love for natural science and for scientific study, and their aptness to teach such both out of school as well as in school. Such a teacher in a country school would prove a real blessing to the youths under his care, and be a great means of keeping them from degenerating on leaving school, as well as preserving them from "larrikinism." Scientific study should be largely inculcated by kind and plain words, by manuals, and by example, for science has extended into all portions of life. What I mean by a scientific education is not the mere

confined knowledge of that one branch taught, or one thing brought more particularly under consideration, whether Euclid's problems or natural science—the science of living things, as seen in the wondrous, complex, yet perfect and beautiful structure of a fly, a shell-fish, or a moss (for beauty's best in unregarded things)—the mention of which as a useful study is too often met with a "Cui bono?" For the opinion is often expressed that certain scientific pursuits are not compatible with the business pursuits of life. But there is no greater fallacy than this, as we may see in the living instances of many eminent men of our time.

The Maori legends were allegories of truth...

I would, however, again observe,—that while the details, the dress, of a legend are always false, and not unfrequently variously fashioned and contrived, the legend itself contains a kernel of truth; a mere invention never becomes a legend.⁹

The celebrated myths of dry land and sky; of Maui fishing up the North Island of New Zealand; of his obtaining fire for man; of his seizing and beating the sun, to have longer daylight; and of the untimely death of the hero through the laughing of the little New Zealand flycatcher; of the ascent to heaven of Rupe and of Tawhake; of the arrival of the first New Zealanders in this country; and many others; are all so many indications of the mind of man groping after truth in ages long past. In the writer's opinion many of those myths will be found to be allegorical.¹⁰

He admired Maori for their "ideality", their Aristotelean quest for a perfect state, and there are places where he gave hints of a metaphysical concept of a unifying theory, a connectedness, a "theory of everything".¹¹

Here, however, let me pause awhile to explain clearly, yet briefly, what I mean by the term Ideality: I mean that superior faculty—that conception of the natural and beautiful, the truthful and symmetrical, which has ever been found to pertain to the higher races, or varieties of men, and in particular to the more gifted among them. As Cousin says (On the Beautiful): — "The Ideal appears as an original conception of the mind. ... Nature or experience gives me the occasion for conceiving the ideal, but the ideal is something entirely different from experience or nature, so that if we apply it to natural, or even to artificial figures, they cannot fill up the condition of the ideal conception, and we are obliged to imagine them exact." Kant lays it down— "By ideal, I understand the idea, not in concreto but in individuo, as an individual thing, determinable or determined by the idea alone." On this subject, also, Emerson impressively writes:— "I hasten to state the principle which prescribes, through different means, its firm law to the useful and beautiful arts. The law is this: The universal soul is the alone creator of the useful and the beautiful; therefore, to make anything useful or beautiful, the individual must be submitted to the universal mind. ... Beneath a necessity thus almighty, what is artificial in man's life seems insignificant. He seems to take his task so minutely from intimations of Nature, that his works become, as it were, hers, and he is no longer free. ... There is but one Reason. The mind that made the world is not one mind, but the mind. Every man is an inlet to the same, and to all of the same. And every work of art is a more or less sure manifestation of the same. ... We feel, in seeing a noble building, much as we do in hearing a perfect song, that it is spiritually organic; that is, had a necessity in nature for being; was one of the possible forms in the Divine mind, and is now only discovered and executed by the artist, not arbitrarily composed by him. ...

The highest praise we can attribute to any writer, painter, sculptor, builder, is, that he actually possessed the thought or feeling with which he has inspired us.” That delightful writer on Art, J. Ruskin—whether considered as artist or art critic—always in love with the Beautiful, and possessing the wonderful power of telling it in such charming language, says:— “I call an idea great in proportion as it is received by a higher faculty of the mind, and as it more fully occupies, and in occupying, exercises and exalts, the faculty by which it is received. ... He is the greatest artist who has embodied in the sum of his works the greatest number of the greatest ideas.” Then Ruskin contrasts the old Venetian worker in glass, with his profusion of design, his personality of purpose, and his love of his art, with the British worker with his mechanical accuracy. “Everything the old Venetian worker made was a separate thing — a new individual creation; but the British worker does things by the gross, and has no personal interest in any one article.”

... According to Cicero, there is nothing of any kind so fair that there may not be a fairer conceived by the mind. He says:— “We can conceive of statues more perfect than those of Phidias. Nor did the artist, when he made the statue of Jupiter or Minerva, contemplate any one individual from which to take a likeness; but there was in his mind a form of beauty, gazing on which, he guided his hand and skill in imitation of it...”

*Possibly some one may say, or think: “Do you really believe that any thing of that kind, or power, ever appertained to the mind of a New Zealander?” And my reply would be: “Yes, undoubtedly, and that in no small degree.”*¹²

The circle is “the perfect, first, most beautiful form,” wrote Aristotle.

Maori showed a similar aesthetic, wrote Colenso. They...

*...greatly excelled in order and regularity, which they carried into almost everything they did; as shown in their parallel carving, regular in its wildness, and in tattooing the right and left faces and posteriors, with circles and scrolls almost mathematically exact;*¹³

*In the building of their war-canoes The exquisite regularity and symmetry of both sides of the vessel, including even that difficult one of carved concentric circles worked in filagree, were astonishing;*¹⁴

He sought signs of a Grand Design. Ancient Greek philosophers speculated that the diversity we perceive masks links that if visible would reveal an underlying unity. Colenso wrote to David Balfour...

*... it would be a really good thing if every plant—however useless or noxious, or insignificant,—could first be known, and accurately described before it gets polished off! For all such (animal & vegetable) are wanted to make up the unbroken chain;— that links animate & inanimate nature together.*¹⁵

*“A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things.”—*

WORDSWORTH.¹⁶

Science then (and of course the afterlife), would discover the truth, the eternal invisible chain of gold and diamonds that ties everything to its ordered place, would thereby reveal the divine purpose of the Creator, and would thus strengthen, rather than weaken, faith.

Some of you now present have heard me quote pertinent language from Sir J. Lubbock bearing on this subject; words

which I would were engraved in brass or in marble, or written in letters of gold and stuck up in the forum; words which I now again with pleasure repeat:—

“Every increase in Science—that is, in positive and ascertained knowledge—brings with it an elevation of Religion.... The immense services which Science has thus rendered to the cause of Religion and Humanity has not yet received the recognition which it deserves. Science is still regarded by many excellent, but narrow-minded, persons as hostile to religious truth; while, in fact, she is only opposed to religious error. The time is approaching when it will be generally perceived that, so far from Science being opposed to Religion, true Religion without Science is impossible.” — (Origin of Civilisation, p. 292.)

For my strong and growing belief is, that there is an eternal invisible golden or adamantine chain, extending alike through all, and continually and securely binding all together in their proper sequence for good: future times will show the truth of this. Now and then, here and there, a link of this chain is found, hit upon accidentally as it were, discovered (much as we daily hear of gold, and precious stones, and still more precious medicines,) by energetic ever-seeking ever-advancing man, for the common good of our race.¹⁷

Three months before he died Colenso quoted seventeenth century English poet Francis Quarles:

“True Faith and Reason are the soul’s two eyes.”

... and in the end that is his *credo*: integration of what he was taught and what he learned, of belief and observation, of God and science, of beauty and truth. Keats, 80 years earlier:

“Beauty is truth, and truth beauty,”—that is all ye know on earth and all ye need to know.

References

1. Colenso to GM Thomson, March 1882.
2. 1877 Manibus Parkinsonibus sacrum. *Trans. N.Z.I.* 10: 115.
3. Benjamin Jowett 1817–1893, theologian, Regius Professor of Greek at Oxford, Master of Balliol College, Vice-Chancellor of the university.
4. 1888 Hawke’s Bay Philosophical Institute: Anniversary Address.
5. 1878 Contributions towards a better Knowledge of the Maori Race. *Trans. N.Z.I.* 11: 77.
6. Perhaps here referring to Darwin’s “False facts are highly injurious to the progress of science, for they often endure long” (*The descent of man*, Ch.XXI).
7. Friedrich Max Müller 1823–1900, German philologist and Orientalist, a founder of the discipline of comparative religion.
8. 1878 *Tracts for the times; No. 1, On the Sabbath and its due observance*. Dinwiddie, Morrison & Co., Napier. pp.34-35.
9. 1889 *Ancient tide-lore and tales of the sea*. R.C. Harding, Napier.
10. 1868 On the Maori Races of New Zealand. *Trans. N.Z.I.* 1: 48.
11. The “theory of everything” purports to explain and link all known physical phenomena.
12. 1878 Contributions towards a better Knowledge of the Maori Race. *Trans. N.Z.I.* 11: 77.
13. 1868 On the Maori Races of New Zealand. *Trans. N.Z.I.* 1: 29.
14. 1878 Contributions towards a better Knowledge of the Maori Race. *Trans. N.Z.I.* 11: 81.
15. Colenso to Balfour 13 July 1886.
16. Quoted in Colenso’s *In memoriam*.
17. 1888 *Hawke’s Bay Philosophical Institute: Anniversary Address by the President, William Colenso, F.R.S., F.L.S.* R.C. Harding, Napier.

Colenso on lies

A scrap of paper, covered in Colenso’s writing in pencil, is among the GC Petersen papers in the Alexander Turnbull Library [ATL 88-038-09]. It is associated with a number of similar papers, all apparently written on board the *Prince Regent* between London and Sydney in 1834 when Colenso was 23. The young man wrote,

What is lying?

I conceive lying to consist of 3 different descriptions or grades,—all detestable—all sins, but varying in magnitude—viz:—

1. a lie of malice—this is the worst description of lying.
2. a lie of profit, or gain.
3. a lie of falsehood or shame.

And it is to be observed that they are generally centered into one focus.

Liars are “children of the Devil”—he is the father of lies—and was a “liar from the beginning”—all mankind, in a state of Nature are prone to this detestable vice.

Lying is a kind of accompaniment to other vices,—I am not at present aware of a single view that it does not in some shape or other attend.— — —


A liar is to be shunned:—a man is not safe in his company, he may be your friend to day, and tomorrow, take away your life—a common proverb has it— “a liar is worse than a thief; for from the latter bolts & bars may secure you, but from the former nothing is safe”.

Scripture abounds with solemn warnings & denunciations against all liars.—

One of our British poets, says,—

a Thief	{	“He who steals my purse, steals trash, 'Tis something—nothing—
a Liar	{	But he who filches from me my good name Robs me of that which not enriches him And makes me poor indeed.”—

S———e

At the start of his political and public service years, Colenso wrote a series of “Tracts for the times” for the *Hawke’s Bay Herald*. No. 5 follows: its King James Version prose and its endearingly maniacal Thus-Spake-Zarathustra style might lead one to ponder narcissistic grandiosity. 

WHO ART THOU? “I am TRUTH.”

Tracts for the times No.5. *Hawke’s Bay Herald* 27 November 1858.

“Dare lucem it dare servem.”

WHO ART THOU?

“I am TRUTH.”

Whence cameth thou?— “I came forth from the throne of the Eternal.”

Whither goest thou?— “I seek an entrance into the heart of every man.”

Where wast thou during times past?— “Always on the earth, free as the winds which bore me; but always opposed, calumniated, ridiculed, kicked, expelled, throttled, put down, burnt, gagged, buried alive, tortured, thrown into wells, gibbeted and crucified.”

By whom?— “By kings, by priests, by popes, by emperors, by lords, by bishops, by officials, by venal hirelings of the pen and the press, by powers.”

Why?—Because they hated me; because they loved tyranny, slavery, extreme wealth, absolute power, place and ease; because they themselves were unshackled by educational-twist, by custom and by precedent, by routine, by duncedom, and by hatred-of-change; because they listened to the loud cries of ignorance and darkness, and to the shriekings of bigotry, of superstition of prejudice and of fear.”

What is thy mission?— “To teach, to inform, to enlighten, to detect, to give knowledge, to strengthen, to cheer, to direct, to uphold, to settle firmly, to incite and lead enquiry, to cause reflection, to humanise, to make godlike, to free.”

Dost thou think to succeed?— “Yes: I am but one but I am all-powerful and immortal, the gift of Him who sent me. The physical

barriers of the universe are mighty—the moral ones are mightier far—and time seems long to the sons of men, but all are as nought to me. I never tire nor rest; I work every where; when crushed to earth in one place, I bide my time there, meanwhile I rise anew in another.”

Hast thou at present any followers?— “I have many—scattered all over the globe; among all peoples, all tribes, all languages, all nationalities, all classes. But chiefly in Britain and her numerous colonies, and in America, are my more advanced followers to be found. I have also very many rising ones in Italy in France in Germany and other places, which another short age will more fully develop.”

Have not thy chief disciples, been always considered disturbers? — “Invariably so. We fare alike: the disciple is not greater than his master; in past ages they were always hunted to death; and even now

“The man who shows his heart,
Is hooted for his nudities and scorned!”

Why is this?— “Because my followers are always in advance of the age in which their lot is cast. This is proved, from the next generation raising monuments to the memory of those whom their fathers either murdered or suffered to die through cold neglect and want.”

If then thy past chief ones have been so ill-used, and so very few among thy present followers escape ridicule coldness and persecution;—what reward hast thou to give them?— “The best the highest the most glorious: to use rightly their reason, the greatest gift to them of the Eternal, Hence they learn truly to know themselves; and, while they learn mentally to soar above all bounds and space, they become as humble as little children at their knowing so little; learn to despise pelf and honour and worldly glitter; and rejoice beyond expression at the new world of mind and freedom on which they have entered, and which ever remains with them ever comforting and strengthening them.”

Since thou sayest, that thou teachest every where, perhaps thou

doest so in every matter and thing?— “I do: such is my mission. I work alike in science and in art, in physics and in morals, in religion and in politics, in the minor events of the fleeting hour and in the hugest ones of the slow-revolving age, in the hamlet’s path and in the path of comets, in the first prattling of an infant’s mind and in the deepest conclusions of the wisest of sages. I taught both my New-Zealand child how to make a flaxen fishing line and my British son how to form the electric band which now girdles the globe. I am naturally opposed to all secret conclaves, whether of the inquisition or the star-chamber, or vestries, or the ‘closed doors’ of petty colonial oligarchies. I abominate all humbug and moonshine and tinsel and ostentation and all vamped up externals. I dissect and shew the inner core and heart of things. I hate all insincerity, and have ever borne testimony against it; I did so 3000 years ago by the old Greek poet, saying,

“Who dares think one thing and another tell,
My soul detests him as the gates of hell.”*—

I inspired the British heart with love of freedom, liberty of the press, and of open trial by jury, and to stick to ‘all fair above board’: I am wholly against such teaching as ‘all fair in love war and politics.’ I counselled the sons of men in ancient days, by the wisest of their race, to ‘buy the truth and sell it not’; and 2000 years ago my doctrine was openly and daily taught by the Founder of Christianity to the men women and children of Judea.”

[Exit TRUTH.]

O! mighty truth, thou must, thou shalt prevail! Go on: work, energise, operate, labour; thou hast much to do here in New Zealand—in Ahuriri; and thou wilt also find great opposition. Brother electors:—

“He is the freeman whom the *truth* makes free,
And all are slaves beside.”—

WM. COLENSO.

Waitangi, Nov. 20, 1858.

Colenso's first foray into Zoological Taxonomy... continued: *Patella solandri*

by Clem Earp

Mea culpa! In my article on Colenso's first foray into zoology, in the July issue of *eColenso*, I omitted the very first species he described, collected early in his journey from East Cape back overland to Auckland.

This was a limpet, *Patella solandri*, which he collected as he fished in the rain along the seashore at Tokomaru Bay in early December 1841.¹ He named it 'in commemoration of Dr. Solander' who had landed at the same bay during Cook's first voyage.

His eye was sharp, for this limpet is certainly unlike the more common species, and these days is placed in a genus by itself. Unfortunately, Colenso's knowledge of Pacific conchology was very sketchy, and he was merely collecting a species which had been seen and described a number of times before. The relevant publications would have been unavailable to Colenso, who in 1844 was still trying to get a copy of G.B. Sowerby's *Manual of Conchology*.²

The first reference to it appears to be in a magnificently illustrated work published in 1795 by a German clergyman, Johann Hieronymus Chemnitz. Chemnitz had a specimen in his own collection, which he labelled with the descriptive phrase 'Patella fragilis, test ovali, pellucida, complanata, fasciis viridescentibus et albis nitidissime fasciata'. This is not a binomial name, and it cannot be accepted as a valid publication. As to the provenance of Chemnitz's specimen, he merely stated 'Es ist diese Art von Patellen bey den Cookischen Seereisen in

der Südsee entdeckt worden' ('This species of *Patella* was discovered during Cook's voyages in the South Seas').³

Andrews⁴ has sketched the murky ways by which shells from Cook's expeditions made their way off the ships and through commercial dealers to Chemnitz and other collectors. In this case, it seems that a well-known dealer, Humphrey, managed to get hold of a collection made by Sparmann during Cook's second voyage, which he then sold to Fabricius for 10 guineas, and from there they ended up with Chemnitz.⁵



Tab. 197. Fig. 1921.

Ex Museo nostro.

Die zerbrechliche Patelle.

Patella fragilis,

testa ovali, pellucida, complanata, fasciis viridescentibus et albis nitidissime fasciata.

Patella fragilis: the figure, and beginning of the description, from Chemnitz's *Conchylien-Cabinet* (combination of images from the original work).

Chemnitz's descriptive name was published as a valid Linnaean binomial *Patella fragilis* in a work by the British naturalist James Sowerby and his sons; the part containing the species was published after James's death, and the species is usually credited to his son George Brettingham Sowerby. There is no description, merely a rather poor figure which is only recognisable by the truncate anterior margin.⁶ However, by relating the name back to Chemnitz's description, this constitutes a valid publication under Art. 12.2.1 of the ICZN.

This species was next collected in New Zealand in 1824 by the French naturalist René Lesson during the voyage of the *Coquille* commanded by Duperrey.⁷ Lesson described it under a new and very French name, *Patella unguis-almae*, of which the specific name can be translated as 'belly-dancer's fingernail'.⁸

The *Coquille*, renamed the *Astrolabe*, and under the command of Dumont d'Urville, returned to New Zealand a few years later in 1826. Aboard this time were the naturalists JRC Quoy and JP Gaimard, who collected more specimens, specifically from French Pass and the Bay of Islands.⁹ They recognised that Lesson's species was the same as that described by Chemnitz, restored the specific name *fragilis*, and assigned it to their new genus *Patelloida*.



Quoy & Gaimard's figures of *Patelloida fragilis*, from *Voyage de la corvette l'Astrolabe*.

I'll leave the taxonomic history of this species here; there were several more assignments to genera such as *Acmaea* and *Notoacmea* before it ended up in its own genus, *Atalacmea* Iredale.¹⁰

Where Colenso comes in next, is with a paper he published in 1881, titled 'Description of two little-known Species of New Zealand Shells'.¹¹ One of these was *Unio waikarensis*, the other was *Patella solandri*. In this paper, initially read before the Hawke's Bay Philosophical Institute, he claimed

'forty years have passed since I first detected and made known these two shells ... Their scientific description, etc., was early published in the "Tasmanian Journal of Natural Science," but I do not find them noticed in any of the modern conchological works in our library, under my own or any other specific names; neither are they included in the exhaustive "List of New Zealand Mollusca," recently laboriously compiled from almost all conchological authorities by Professor Hutton, and published last year by the New Zealand Government. I therefore conclude that they are still but little known. This, however, may be easily accounted for, if, as I suppose, the single localities in which I separately found them are their only known habitats.'

This received a scorching reply from none other than T. Kirk, singling out the *Patella*, who listed 5 recent publications (including his own paper on the botany and zoology of Omaha) and concluded 'I have myself collected it at Auckland, Wanganui, and Wellington... It is therefore by no means the local shell supposed by Mr. Colenso; quite the contrary.'¹²

There is one final mystery: where are the specimens of *Patella solandri* Colenso said (in the paper just cited) he displayed at the meeting of the Hawke's Bay Philosophical Institute, and which he also claimed that he had 'distributed several specimens to various parts of the world' at the time of their initial discovery?

While Te Papa has Colenso specimens of *Unio waikarensis*, it does not seem to have any of the *Patella*. Searches in the online databases of the British Natural History Museum, Oxford University, Linnean Society, the Hunterian Museums of London and Glasgow and even the Penzance Natural History Society have drawn a blank. Their final resting place remains unknown.



Atalacmea fragilis, Cape Palliser. Photo by Lisa Bennett, downloaded from <http://naturewatch.org.nz/photos/1672752> and reproduced here by Creative Commons licence CC-BY-NC.

References

- Colenso, 'Memoranda of an Excursion, made in the Northern Island of New Zealand in the summer of 1841–2; intended as a contribution towards the ascertaining of the Natural Productions of the New Zealand Groupe: with particular reference to their Botany'. Tasmanian Journal of Natural Science, Agriculture, Statistics, etc vol. 2: 210–234, 241–308. The formal description of the species is on p. 226 of issue 8, published in January 1845 according to Plomley (1969), rather than 1844 as stated on the cover.
- Colenso, letter to WJ Hooker, 7 March 1844, in Ian St George's Colenso's Collections, p. 180.
- Chemnitz JH 1795. Neues systematisches Cochylien-Cabinet. Pp. 182–183, pl. 197, fig. 1921 (very poor drawing, uncoloured).
- Andrews JRH 1986. The Southern Ark. Zoological discovery in New Zealand 1769–1900. Century Hutchinson, Auckland. xii + 237 p. See pp. 45–49.
- Chemnitz JH 1783. Von den südländischen Conchylien, welche sich in der Sammlung des Herrn Pastor Chemnitz [sic] in Kopenhagen befinden und ben den Cookischen Seereisen gesammelt worden. Der Naturforscher 19: 177–208. In this paper Chemnitz describes how he came by some of the shells, and informally describes them along with the English labels attached to them (this limpet may not be among this lot).
- Sowerby J, Sowerby GB & Sowerby J de C. 1820–1825. The genera of Recent and Fossil Shells. Pl. 140, fig. 6 ... this is so poor that it will not be reproduced here.
- Lesson R 1830. Voyage autour du Monde, exécuté par Ordre du Roi, sur la Corvette de Sa Majesté, La Coquille, pendant les années 1822, 1823, 1824 et 1825. Zoologie. Vol. 2 part 1. The description is on p. 420.
- From the French *almé*, a term in vogue in the French Orientalist period of the late 18th and early 19th century, from the Egyptian Arab dialect word *عالمية* still the general term for a female entertainer who could be a singer or other musician, but it was the dancers who most captured the French imagination.
- Quoy JRC & Gaimard JP 1834. Voyage de la corvette l'Astrolabe : exécuté par ordre du roi, pendant les années 1826–1827–1828–1829 sous le commandement de J. Dumont d'Urville. Zoologie t.3:pt.1, pp. 351–352, pl. 71, figs 28–30.
- Iredale T 1915. 'A Commentary on Suter's "Manual of the New Zealand Mollusca."' Trans. Roy. Soc. NZ 47: 417–497. Unfortunately Iredale used Lesson's specific name, under the impression that 'fragilis' had not been validly published, which he later had to correct. For a full synonymy covering these many name changes, see the last page of Oliver WRB 1926, 'Australasian Patelloididae', Trans. Roy. Soc. NZ 56: 497–582.
- Colenso, 1881. 'Description of two little-known Species of New Zealand Shells'. Trans. Roy. Soc. NZ 14:168–169.
- Kirk TW 1882. 'On Patella Solandri, Colenso'. NZ Journal of Science, 1 :213–214.

Alexander Turnbull in Napier

Among the GC Petersen papers [ATL 88-038-09] is an undated note from Henry Hill addressed to Alexander Turnbull who was in Napier,

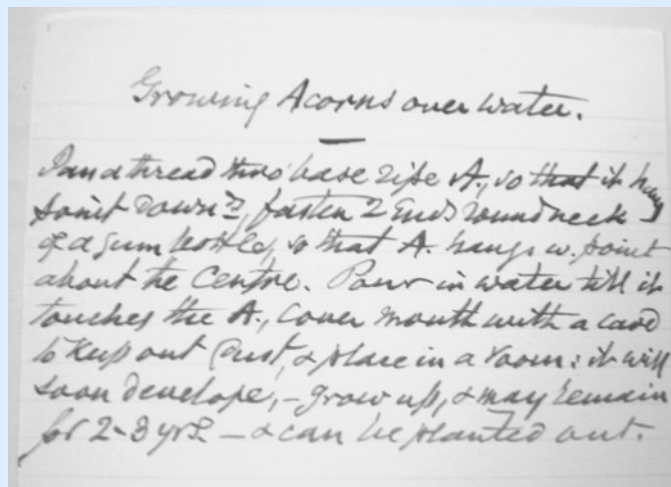
Re Mr Colenso's Manuscripts.

I have not been able to trace any of the late Rev. W. Colenso's diaries. Mr Edwards, of the Napier Gas Works told me some time ago that Mr Plowman of Napier had sent several of the diaries to Mrs Colenso at Otaki. At my request an advertisement appeared in the "Herald" asking anyone who had manuscripts to return them to Mr Hoadly, auctioneer, but there was no response.

Mr Martin Manager for Kirkcaldie & Co. made several purchases at the Colenso sale & I believe some manuscripts were found among other papers.

I have the "Day & Waste book," kept by Mr Colenso when he had charge of the printing press etc at Paihia extending from 1836 to 1842-3. This is of great historical importance as it contains date of issue with cost etc of all the earlier printing done at the Missionary printing office. It is a record that is worthy of being printed as a whole as showing the production of the printing office & its distribution over the North island. I also possess a large collection of the various maori publications as issued between /35 /43.

Of letters I have an abundance written by Mr Colenso: and I also possess two small manuscript books which were on in the forties. These contain items of interest connected with his journeys into parts of the coast.



Great oaks from little acorns grow.

William Colenso's method, on a scrap of paper
in one of his botanical diaries at Te Papa.

I know he had a very large book in which were entered all his earlier expenses when living in the Bay of Islands. The cost of articles of living, the wages he secured & most interesting items of missionary life & times were recorded. He used to read extracts to me. What has become of the book I do not know.

*Unfortunately, I was at the *** for a short time *** and from what I have heard everything was sold in “job lots,” without reference to value or contents.*

Mr Hamilton, Registrar, University of Otago, has some manuscripts that he found in a loose heap. Some of them, I believe, are valuable, as they form a portion of the Lexicon.

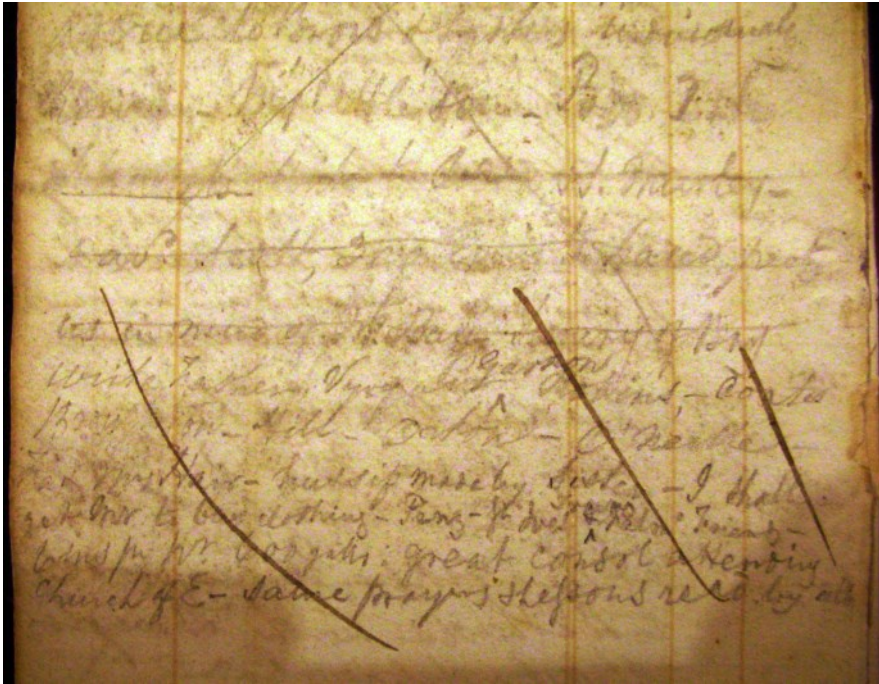
H. Hill.

*To,
A. Turnbull Esq. F.L.S.
Napier.*

Presumably that marks the start of the Alexander Turnbull Library's collection of Colenso manuscripts, the most complete collection in existence.

Very appropriate, for Colenso stayed next door in what was Wingfield Street (soon to be William Colenso Square) when he was a politician in Wellington.





His sister's hussif

This is a page from Colenso's 1834 notebook in the Hawke's Bay Museum Trust collection at MTG Hawke's Bay: faded pencil entries, rubbed, crossed out and crumpled—but digitally enhanced in Photoshop to improve legibility. Perhaps these words were written shortly after his arrival in Sydney, where he reminds himself to

write to Brors & Sisters individually

**** – Mr Littlejohn – Penz. ****

*****. *Write to Revd. S. Marley –
travd. South, 30 miles the land put
us in mind of Mts. Bay – scenery of Bay.*

*Write Father, Vyvyan, Mrs Garmon, Robins, – Coates
Broughton – Hill – Orton – O'Nealle –*

*Fa & Mr's Hair – **hussif made by Sister** – I shall
get Mr to buy clothing – Penz – St. Ives, Turo & Falm. Friends –*

*** pr nr. 600 galls: great consol attending
Church of E – same Prayers & Lessons read by all.

Hussif: an alternative form of hussy, which meant a housewife, then a sewing case. Traditional hussifs were a long strip of fabric pockets that could be rolled or folded. They contained needles, pins, small scissors, buttons, thread, hooks-&-eyes. In other words a hussif was a basic sewing kit. Simple sewing kits used to be given to soldiers as their "housewife". I remember being startled by my English teacher, "Pansy" Napier (he wore a bow tie) who, when he read us Iago's speech in Othello ("Come on, come on. You are pictures out of door, bells in your parlours, wild cats in your kitchens, saints in your injuries, devils being offended, players in your housewifery, and housewives in your beds"), pronounced it "players in your hussifry and housewives in your beds". We adolescent lads were pretty impressed. [Desdemona (laughing): Oh fie upon thee, slanderer!]

Ann Collins told me that, of William's four sisters, Jane Emily was closest in age and was 17 when he left for NZ; she was a dressmaker in Westminster in 1841. Thirty miles south of Sydney the land put them in mind of Mounts Bay—did they travel to Wollongong?

Brief von Colenso zu Suter

We have mentioned Colenso's German connections before this (eColenso July 2013). Our knowledge of his relationship with conchologist Heinrich (Henry) Suter is inched forward by this extract of a letter from Colenso to Suter dated 9 January 1890, recorded in one of Suter's many notebooks, sent to us by Suter's great grand daughter Dr Pamela Hyde. (Our knowledge of the English name "cloud piercer" for Mt Cook is, on the other hand, considerably advanced).

Suter arrived in the Wairarapa in 1897, and the following year became assistant manager at the Hermitage, Mt Cook. Colenso was the acknowledged authority on te reo.

Aus Brief von W. Colenso. 9. I. 90.

Aorangi.

1.1 a common name for many places (not mountains), things, etc.

2.1 It cannot mean "cloud piercer".

3.1 Ditto is not truly Maori for globe, world, etc.; this word is one so adapted by foreigners; much like "marama" for mouth, "tau" for year etc. etc.

4.1 "Aorangi" for Mount Cook may have meant, to the old Maoris—light of day (i.e. from its reflecting the early-sun); or it may have meant, the peak or summit, which gathers, or on which rests, the light cirri-cumulus clouds, an image often used in their emotional poetry.

Papa

is a proper Maori term for the land, earth—generic, collective.

Huhu

is the common name for all large coleopt. larvae.

Wai-rarapa.

may mean glistening or shining water (from action on the sun's rays on it);—according to the old traditional typographical and practical story—viz.—(stanza:)

"Ka rarapa nga kanohi, ko wairarapa,
Te rarapatanga o tou tupuna, e hine."

from the satisfactory glistening of the eyes, through pleasure,
on first beholding the lake



Wairarapa Moana

Latty on the Solomons?

There are a number of photographs of Melanesian scenes in the British Museum (eg. Fig.1), including three that have been attributed to “R. d. Colenso” from the name written on the back. I have been unable to get clear shots of these inscriptions from the BM but by reversing the image and darkening it a little (Fig.2), one can read, showing through on this photograph, “R.L. Colenso. Clement Marau’s old chapel at Solomon Islands.” Colenso’s name appears similarly on the other two photographs (eg. Fig.3).

Ridley Latimer Colenso (Latty) was never in Melanesia but his mother Elizabeth Colenso was and she knew Rev. Clement Marau c.1857–1926, a Melanesian Anglican clergyman. He was made a deacon by Bishop J.R. Selwyn in 1890, and ordained to the priesthood in 1903 by Bishop Cecil Wilson. Born on Merelava in the Banks Islands, he was taken to Norfolk Island for Christian education and ministerial training. He worked as a teacher and pastor in the Solomon Islands.

Elizabeth may have identified the scenes in the photographs for Latty during one of his journeys back to New Zealand, and he wrote the identifications on the backs.

The photographer is therefore still unknown.



Koreneho, Neho, Nehu

When Māori were baptised they were given Christian first names (often biblical) and chose their own surnames, perhaps from some suggested by the missionary. Sometimes the surname was that of the missionary doing the baptising, but not necessarily. Thus we have surnames like Wiremu (Williams brothers), Paratene (Broughton), Henare (Henry)—and of course Koreneho, Nehu and Neho for Colenso. Some of the Nehu family claim direct descent from Colenso but probably their ancestor was baptised (rather than sired) by him.

These are quotes from Colenso's journals....

Maunsell's son, Baptized this morning, was, at his own particular request, named Straith, after Major Straith; whose name he had obtained by translation of the Society's Jubilee Letter.

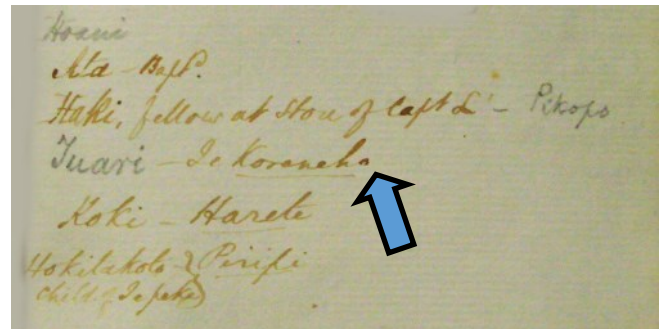
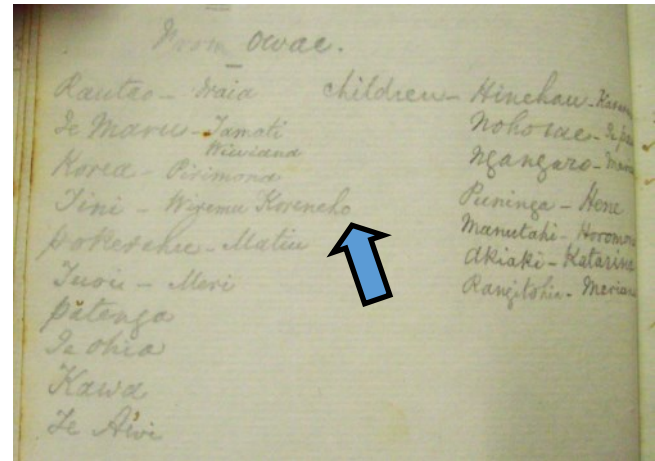
They were named, John, Samuel, Simeon, and Lydia: I chose Simeon, for the venerable old man.

One of the young men, (at my desire,) had been baptized Thomas Vyvyan, after my ever-to-be-remembered Cornish Pastor; another had been named W.C. after myself.

There is a later note in Colenso's "Day & Waste book" of a Psalter sold to "W. Koreneho, Owae". He is one of two men noted in Colenso's 1841 bush diary—Tini (who became Wiremu Koreneho) and Tuari (Te Koreneho)—see figures. →

Colenso distinguished between "Christian" names—those given at baptism—and Māori first names. 27 April 1891 to RC Harding...

I don't think that either "Wahinekinu," or "Wahinekimo," is a "Christian name" (as you say) of a little girl: more likely her Maori name.



Major General Robley

On 1 February 1897 Rev. William Colenso wrote to “My very dear old friend” Dr Joseph Hooker,¹ mentioning,

Major. Genl. Robley on Maori tattoo, preserved heads, &c, &c. (an unpalatable gruesome subject w. me!) as he had (again) written to me a long letter by this mail, & has promised to send me a copy of his book – just then pubd.

He had written earlier to Coupland Harding,²

I have lately received some strange letters!.... One from Major Genl. Robley, from London, (who was in N.Z. in the War) re human heads!! and “mokos”—he has several heads of Maoris! is going to publish and wants more information (which he won’t get from me!)—has seen Sir. G. Grey, who declines, or something like it—but by & by I will send you his letter, w. drawings, quite unique, after I have replied.

... and again to Harding on 4 October 1896,³

Hope Robley may forget me w. his book of preserved heads!

Te Ara has Robley’s biography: <http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/1966/robley-major-general-horatio-gordon>.

Horatio Gordon Robley 1840–1930 fought in India with the 68th Durham Light Infantry and came with them to the battle of Gate Pa in 1863. He was an accomplished artist and collector of curios, including 35 preserved tattooed Māori heads. His book *Moko or Maori Tattooing* was published in 1896.



Major-General Horatio Gordon Robley
with his collection of tattooed Māori heads:
a very offensive image today—and offensive to Colenso
in the nineteenth century.

1. Kew JDH/2/1/4 Letters to Joseph Hooker, Vol IV: p162; ATL Micro-Ms-Coll-10 Reel 27: E538.

2. ATL MS-Copy-Micro-0485-1. From its content this letter must have been dated between 21 December 1884 and February 1885. At least the first page is missing.

3. ATL qMS-0499.

Tattoo pigment preparation

In his 1868 “Essay on the botany, Geographic and Economic, of the North Island of the New Zealand group” (Transactions of the New Zealand Institute 1: 233-283), Colenso wrote,

The spines of the Tumatakuru, or New Zealand Thorn, (*Discaria Toumatou*), were sometime used for tattooing, though instruments of bone were preferred; the black pigment for the same operation being obtained from the soot of old and hard Kapia, or Kauri resin, dug out of the earth; and also from the ashes of the curious vegeto-caterpillar fungus, the Hawhato (*Cordiceps Robertsii*), which was sometimes mixed with the black juice of the Mahoe berry (*Melicytus ramiflorus*).

In his 1891 “Vestiges; reminiscences; memorabilia, of Works, Deeds and Sayings of the ancient Maori” (Transactions of the New Zealand Institute 24: 445-467), he expanded...

Of the preparation of black pigment for tattooing

The ancient Maoris had more ways than one of obtaining the black substance used in tattooing, which colouring-matter also varied in quality, partly owing to what it was made from; that for the countenance being superior to that used for the lower parts of the body. One way of obtaining the best kind was as follows:—

First, two proper careful men were selected for the work. This, too, was done with ceremony, they being (for the time) tapu (i.e., under the laws of taboo)—rigidly set apart. A small kiln-like furnace (*ruangarehu*) was excavated in the side of a hill suitably situated. The substances to be used in burning for their soot—kauri-resin

(kapia) and the resinous veins of white-pine wood (kapara)—were got ready; a net made from the wharanui flax leaves finely split, composed of very small and close meshes, and beaten well, so as to be rough and scabrous from long broken fibres, in order the better to catch and retain the soot (awe), which was intended to adhere only to the network: this net was fixed properly and securely over the top opening or chimney of the kiln, and above it were placed thick mats and suchlike, to prevent the escape of the burning soot and smoke. All being ready, a very calm fine night was chosen for the firing of the kiln—a night in which there should not be the least breath of moving air; and, the kiln being fired, those two men remained all night at their [450] post, attending to their work, carefully feeding the fire. When all the resinous substances were burnt up, and the kiln cold—the calm weather still continuing—the soot was carefully collected and mixed up with the fat of birds, and then given to a Maori dog to eat, which dog had also been early set apart for this work—tied up, made to fast, and kept hungry, that it might perform its part and eat the prepared morsels with avidity. After devouring the mixed food the dog was still kept tied up, and not allowed to eat any other aliment until it had voided the former. When the faeces were evacuated they were carefully gathered, and mixed up and kneaded with birds’ oil and a little water, and, when this mixture became dry and hard, it was put up securely into a large shell, or into a hollowed pumice or soft stone, and laid by carefully, buried in the earth, for future use. It is said to have possessed no disagreeable odour when dry (though it had while fresh), and, though long kept, it did not become bad nor spoil through keeping, which, on the contrary, was said to improve it, and it was very much prized.

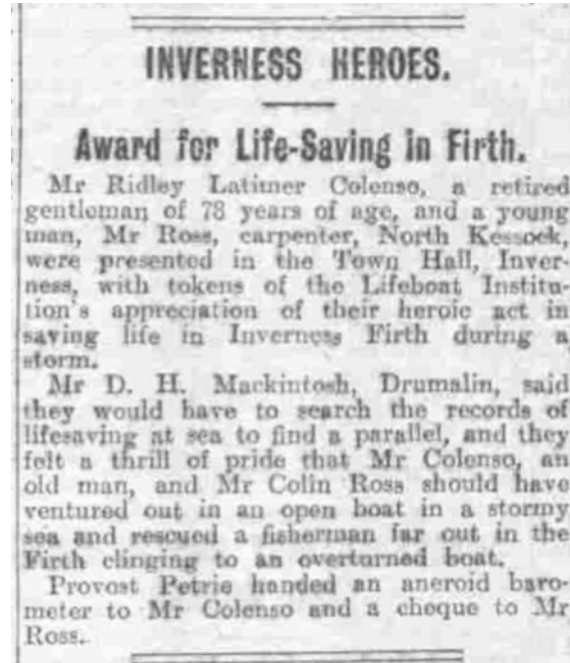
It was this pigment, so put up and kept, that was the origin of one of their proverbs, “*Puritia te ngarahu kauri*” = Keep to thyself thy kauri-resin-soot pigment. This saying was used when a person was unwilling to give what was asked, the same being some common thing, and

not at all needed by the avaricious owner. But there is a double meaning here, in this simple sentence (proverb)—namely, “You may never require it, or live to use it.” (See Trans. N.Z. Inst., vol. xii., p. 145.)

The pigment was applied from a vessel called *ipu ngārahu*—sometimes elaborately and beautifully carved (see <http://collections.tepapa.govt.nz/search?searchTerm=ngarahu&scope=all>) and sometimes simple, like this pumice one, recently auctioned.



Latty the life saver



The Dundee Evening Telegraph 25 April 1923

Sinners of Mataikona

Travelling south along the Wairarapa coast in April 1851, Colenso wrote in his journal,

Journeying hence (from the Whareama river mouth) with George (a Native Teacher) by my side, he finished his sad recital of the state of things at his village (Mataikona); whence I found, that out of a population of 60, no less than eight had died, and 16 had fallen into gross sin since my last visit! Of the former, 6 were Baptized; of the latter, all save two; and not only so, but 8 of these were also Communicants of some years standing, having all been Baptized by the Archdeacon of the District at Table Cape.—And, worse still, among them were, the principal Chief (Te Wiremu Te Potangaroa), his eldest Son, & the two Monitors of the village! Renata Te Ao (the Chief's eldest son, whom I had married in 1848, and whom GOD hath graciously blessed with a fine son, whom I Baptized on this visit,) had lately committed adultery with two females of this village. All seemed truly “to glory in their shame”, in the lowest and worst sense of the word. I could not but rebuke George for his not having more fully told me of these things when at Mataikona.

Curiously, a list of “be Sinners” has survived, pencilled in Colenso’s hand on a scrap torn from the October page of an 1851 te reo calendar. Bracketed together presumably means being together, though the last entry, in which sheep are bracketed with two names, may challenge that interpretation.

One thing rival missionaries seemed to take pleasure in accusing each other of, in those days of competitive baptism, was the baptising of people who were really not yet true believers, simply in order to boost the tally of baptisms. The rapid reversion to sin of those baptised by one's rivals was cited as evidence of such a practice.

Colenso is saying here that their “falling into gross sin” suggested that Williams may have been too hasty in baptising them.

